

February 20, 2023

Dear Members of Government, Administration & Elections Committee,

Re: In Favor of Adequately Funding and Creating An Early Voting Plan that Works for All Our Voters

Early Voting Legislation: **Support SB 1057, SB 1064, SB 5004**

Voters overwhelmingly cast their ballots in favor of early voting in November. CT will join Washington DC and 46 other states that offer their citizens increased access to voting. Now it's the legislature's turn to weigh in with specific hours, days and procedures. Please keep in mind that voters want more options for casting their ballots. The 14 day proposal envisioned in SB 5004 is a good start, particularly for towns with 45,000 residents or more. The 10 days of early voting outlined in HB 5721 may be sufficient for the less populous towns. CT residents who work nontraditional hours or who are caregivers need **some evening and weekend hours** to have a real opportunity to vote early. Seniors and disabled residents would also benefit from additional voting days. Surprise illnesses or last minute business trips have derailed my own participation in statewide elections at times.

I realize that the voters are not the only stakeholders here. Our 169 towns and their budgets will also be affected by early voting. I urge this committee to ensure the success of early voting by advocating for **funding for the State's election infrastructure and for municipal budgets**.

The State's aging tabulators are of critical concern. According to an article from *CT Insider* (December 25, 2022), parts for these machines are no longer available since the company that made them no longer exists. Election officials must seek out parts for repairs from neighboring states that have already replaced their machines. We are courting trouble if we ignore this issue any longer. At our 750 statewide polling places, we will need to replace our 1,500 tabulators, at an estimated cost of \$25mm (CT voters approved early voting. Here's how their new secretary of state wants to make it happen, *The 19th*, February 16, 2023). We will also need electronic polling books to implement our early voting plan. Bonding authority for the capital equipment is a necessary first step to rectifying our antiquated tabulators.

Researchers from The Center for Election Innovation and Research (CEIR) prepared a proposal for Connecticut outlining common early voting practices and potential implementation expenses to consider. Upfront equipment costs will include the aforementioned tabulators, poll books, supplies and charging stations. **Monies for personnel and training costs** are essential and will be need to be funded by the state. Some municipalities may incur expenses for using and securing early voting locations. Finally, **early voting will require voter education** so advertising and postage fees will need to be part of the funding package. With that said, the Secretary of State should be involved in leading the education effort. Thanks to prudent fiscal management, our state is in its best financial condition in decades. Please make sure that our vital voting infrastructure is fully funded and that early voting is available later this year. Our democracy and our pursuit of equity across the state depends upon this timely investment.

Respectfully,
Linda Pryde
134 Regents Park
Westport, CT 06880